Australasia-Pacific Extension Network Limited

Communication Strategy

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CONTENTS

1. PURPOSE

This document sets out the communication strategy for Australasia Pacific Extension Network Limited (APEN) and provides guidance for project communication activities to:

- establish a roadmap for communication to ensure all partners are on the same page
- streamline messaging
- ensure all available partner communication tools are being utilised
- detail processes and attribution requirements.

This strategy is underpinned by the APEN Strategic   Plan 2017 – 2022.

2. CURRENT SITUATION

APEN is the non-government member based not for profit public company limited by guarantee for extension professionals working in primary industries, natural resource management and communities. The last 12 months has seen APEN transition from an incorporated association to its present structure. A new constitution was agreed to at the 2017 AGM. An inaugural Board was appointed and endorsed at the AGM. APEN continues to go through significant strategic growth and development in alignment with its 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. The strategic imperative for APEN is to:

1. positively influence the extension agenda and continually review the reputation of the profession
2. broaden APEN's base and reach, providing relevant services to extension professionals
3. deliver effective targeted communications, that meet members needs and enhances the APEN brand
4. engage and interact with APEN members using both face-to-face and online mechanisms
5. maintain good organisational governance

APEN has a sound track record in servicing the primary industries sector. There is heightened opportunity to leverage the natural resource management and community-based sectors.

APEN employ on a volunteer basis an Editor who oversees the editing of ExtensionNet Newsletter and eBulletin.

3. OWNERSHIP

The APEN Board is the custodian of the communication strategy. Delivery and execution of the strategy will be through the APEN Communication Sub-committee and resourced as deemed appropriate by the APEN Board. A Terms of Reference for the APEN Communication Sub-committee is provided in APPENDIX 1. The RAC are an important link and contact point with members and assist with enabling the strategy through the APEN Board.

4. OPPORTUNITIES

This strategy has been developed to build on existing communication channels. There are some significant opportunities to respond to member feedback, by increasing the frequency of information through some channels and ensuring all information that is provided is clear and relevant to member needs.

Targeted communications through appropriate channel and tool selection will increase external stakeholder engagement to enhance the merit of APEN and the professionalism of the extension industry. Opportunities also exists to increase audience levels for the existing social media channels, including:

- more regular posting of content
- greater use of photos
- increasing the use of video
- using targeted advertising on Facebook.

Further to building on the existing channels mentioned above, this strategy outlines opportunities to develop new messages to promote APEN to prospective members and external stakeholders.

These include:

- media releases targeted at both the industry and, where relevant, the wider community
- videos to accompany case studies, for distribution through media and via social media, where 'watching' rather than 'reading' a feed is an increasing phenomenon.

Consideration must also be placed on resourcing this strategy beyond the current APEN Board and Editor.

5. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

The objectives of APEN communications are to:

- undertake a strategic and coordinated communications approach (including branding) to ensure consistency in messaging and help APEN achieve its Strategic plan
- ensure stakeholders and interested parties are adequately informed of the objectives, activities and outcomes of APEN
- demonstrate the success of APEN and ensure stakeholders understand what we do
- change behaviour and perceptions where necessary such as driving membership.

6. AUDIENCES

The primary audiences for all communications are:

- extension professionals: Australia and New Zealand

- extension professionals: international
- federal and state government agencies
- industry bodies
- agri-businesses.

The secondary audiences are:

- rural and agriculture sector media
- general media, particularly science-oriented outlets
- potential partners.

7. STAKEHOLDER PLAN

7.1 Internal Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders are depicted in Table 1. APEN members are a key stakeholder having input into the direction of the organisation and how activities are promoted.

The APEN Board is also an important stakeholder, as the body responsible for setting strategic direction of the organisation.

Table 1 Internal Stakeholders

Internal Stakeholders	Level of Engagement	Channels	Tools
APEN Members	Highest	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Journal, Website	Article, case study, feature, survey, video, opinion piece, news byte, expert article, annual report, webinar, roadshow, conference
APEN Board	High	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Journal, Website	Article, case study, feature, survey, videos, opinion piece, news byte, expert article, annual report, webinar, roadshow, conference
Committees	High	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Journal, Website	Article, case study, feature, survey, videos, opinion piece, news byte, expert article, annual report, webinar, roadshow, conference

RAC	High	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Journal, Website	Article, case study, feature, survey, videos, opinion piece, news byte, expert article, annual report, webinar, roadshow, conference

7.2 External Stakeholders

External stakeholders are depicted in Table 2. An important stakeholder overseeing extension in the agricultural and natural resource management area are the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and Department of the Environment and Energy.

However, a multitude of government bodies – local, state and federal – are affected by the spill-over effects of extension practice. These include health, finance, planning, infrastructure, telecommunications and education.

The APEN communication strategy aims to reach peak industry bodies representing the aforementioned sectors such as the National Farmers Federation.

Organisations such as state agencies and consultancies delivering – or potentially delivering – extension by APEN membership need to be informed of any opportunities coming up, and results they might be able to build on.

The general public are impacted by any changes to regulations and practices, such as natural resource management as well as the point of view of food production, and are also therefore stakeholders. Their main information sources will be through the media.

Table 2 External stakeholders

External Stakeholders	Level of engagement	Channels	Tools
Agencies	High	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Website	Article, case study, feature, survey, videos, opinion piece, news byte, expert article, webinar, roadshow, conference
Tertiary Institutions	High	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Website	Article, case study, feature, survey, videos, opinion piece, news byte, expert article, webinar, roadshow, conference
Private consultants	High	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook,	Article, case study, feature, survey, videos,

		Twitter, LinkedIn, Website	opinion piece, news byte, expert article, webinar, roadshow, conference
Partners	High	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Website	Advertorial, feature, video, case study
Rural and Agricultural Media	High	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Website	Media release
General Media	High	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Website	Media release
Related industries including Industry Representative Bodies	Medium	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Website	Media release, case study, feature, article, news byte, expert article, webinar, roadshow, conference
Related societies and Associations including the Australian Evaluation Society	Medium	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Website	Media release
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and Department of the Environment and Energy	Medium	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Website	Media release, case study, feature, article, news byte, expert article, webinar, roadshow, conference
Other gov't departments (state and local - including health, education, environment, finance, planning, infrastructure, telecommunications)	Low	ExtensionNet Newsletter, eBulletins, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Website	Media release, case study, feature, article, news byte, expert article, webinar, roadshow, conference
General public	Low	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Website	Media release

8. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Table 3 summarises the communication channels APEN utilises. Consideration is required to determine the access to these for member and non-members.

Table 3 Communication Channels

Channel	Purpose	Frequency	Medium	Reach	Membership Only
Annual Report	Statutory Requirement and showcase achievements of APEN	Annual	Digital	550	Yes
ExtensionNet Newsletter: printed	Share extension news, key events and achievements of APEN and others	Annual	Hardcopy	550	Yes
ExtensionNet Newsletter: digital	Share extension news, key events and achievements of APEN and others	Quarterly	Digital newsletter	Unknown	No
eBulletins	Share extension news, key events, activities and achievements of APEN and others	Monthly	Digital- email (and online)	580	Yes
Facebook	Share stories and achievements of APEN and others as well as promote key events	Weekly	Digital	250	No
Twitter	Share extension news, key events and achievements of APEN and others as well as promote key events	Weekly	Digital	491	No

LinkedIn	Build strategic relationships and initiate group discussions around extension to grow APEN social network	Weekly	Digital	522	No
Journal	Support innovation and practice change in extension through high-quality articles on extension theory and practice	Annual	Hardcopy	Unknown	No
Website	Provide information on APEN members and attract new members and support current members	On-going update	Digital	N/A	No
Webinars	Showcase practice change in extension through interactive webinars on extension theory and practice	Quarterly	Digital	N/A	Yes

9. SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Social media is a relatively new channel for APEN, however, it is important to follow the communities general trend and shift toward increased use of this type of communication.

To allow better tracking of analytics, posts will include the hashtag #APENetwork.

The aim is to provide at least one post a week for Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, and to monitor these channels for material that could be re-posted, 'liked' or re-tweeted. Leveraging existing communities through this approach is likely to increase reach of key events.

Facebook advertising should be carried out during the year associated with key activities such as Webinars, Roadshows and Conferences, including:

- 'likes' campaigns, designed to boost the number of people following the page
- 'promoted posts', which help to ensure important information is seen by more people, or highly engaging material is exposed to more people than through organic reach.

Facebook advertising can be targeted through categories such as location, age, gender and interests. Demographics such as 'field of study', 'employers' and 'job title' could be used to target those with an interest in extension, as well as 'interests' such as 'agriculture' and 'communities'. Tagging of relevant organisations and pages in Facebook posts will also increase engagement and reach of content.

Topics which may be suited to promoted posts include event and event outcomes, and opportunities for member input into the strategic direction of the organisation.

10. MEDIA RELEASES

Media releases and media liaison are a cost-effective way of reaching stakeholders and positioning the organisation with emphasis on influencing an outcome.

However, as the information will also have to appeal to the general public, content for media releases will need to have a broad appeal, and are most likely to relate to event outcomes. This is particularly important in regional areas. Potential ideas and frequency of distribution will be included in the continuing discussions with the APEN Board.

Circulation of media releases via a Mailchimp account to targeted media in metro, rural and regional areas as needed.

Four features will also be produced, which provide an opportunity to target specific publications with content suited directly to their audiences. Discussions will be held with the editors in advance of anything written, to ensure the content is suited to the audience and the style of each publication.

This might include articles highlighting the work being done through the mentoring program or the APEN Roadshow.

11. KEY MESSAGES

Key messages have been identified in Table 4.

Table 4 Key messages

Key communications messages	What they need to know	Example Audience
What is the value of being a member of APEN?	Enrich your professional development through the largest network of extension	Extension professional's Australia, New Zealand and international – Members

	professionals across Australia, New Zealand and the broader Asia Pacific Region.	and Non-members
	By joining APEN you become part of a forum of professionals to share extension knowledge, information, skills, and experience across Australia, New Zealand and the broader Asia Pacific Region.	
	Joining APEN gives you access to the largest network of extension professionals in the Southern Hemisphere.	
	Members are provided with exclusive member only professional development opportunities across Australia, New Zealand and the broader Asia Pacific Region.	
	Through collective impact and influence, the APEN network advocates the betterment of extension professionals across the broader Asia Pacific Region.	
Who is APEN?	APEN is a network representing over 500 extension professionals across Australia, New Zealand and the broader Asia Pacific Region.	All
	Through collective impact and influence, the APEN network advocates the betterment of extension professionals across the	

	broader Asia Pacific Region.	
What does APEN do?	APEN supports professional development of extension professionals in Australia, New Zealand and the broader Asia Pacific region.	All
	APEN supports networking opportunities for extension professionals in Australia, New Zealand and the broader Asia Pacific region.	Extension professional's Australia, New Zealand and international – Members and Non-members
	APEN provides a voice for extension professionals in Australia, New Zealand and the broader Asia Pacific region.	
What is extension?	Extension is the process of enabling change in individuals, communities and industries, by building capacity and influencing behaviour to resolve problems and create more sustainable futures through innovation, change and learning.	General media, particularly science-oriented outlets
	Extension involves a range of disciplines, including applied research and demonstration, and participatory empowerment and facilitation.	
	Extension professionals are employed by government agencies, community and health agencies, private	

	practice, natural resource management bodies, agribusinesses and educational institutions.	
Why partner (sponsor) with APEN?	APEN is a network representing over 500 extension professionals across Australia, New Zealand and the broader Asia Pacific Region.	Potential partners
	Through collective impact and influence, the APEN network advocates the betterment of extension professionals across the broader Asia Pacific Region.	
	APEN provides a voice for extension professionals in Australia, New Zealand and the broader Asia Pacific region.	
Who are APEN members?	APEN members are from government agencies, community and health agencies, private practice, natural resource management bodies, agribusinesses and educational institutions.	All

12. EVENT CALENDAR

Key events to prompt content generation is depicted in Table 5.

Table 5 Event calendar

Month	Seasonal Factors
January	F2F Board Meeting
February	Mentoring program up and running

March	
April	
May	Start APEN Roadshow
June	
July	
August	
September	
October	End APEN Roadshow
November	AGM – Election of Directors
December	

13. MEDIA LIAISON

13.1 Media protocol:

- All requests for media interviews or comment must be immediately referred to the APEN Executive Officer. The Executive Officer will liaise with the President to determine handling of the enquiry.
- All media must be approved through the APEN President. This will be facilitated by the Executive Officer.
- APEN Directors may be the media spokesperson as determined by the President.
- Where applicable, APEN will involve APEN members before issuing any media releases, statements or other media communications. If the issue is urgent, APEN President may make an executive decision on a response. Commentators will be determined by APEN on a case-by-case basis.

14. ATTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS

APEN should be acknowledged in all publications, promotional materials, signage and activities.

All publicity, announcements and media releases relating to APEN must be cleared through the APEN President before release to the media.

Where appropriate, the APEN logo should also be used.

Attribution and logo use should be included in a style and brand guidelines.

15. EVALUATION

The success of this strategy will be measured through increased engagement and awareness of APEN activities by members and key stakeholders. It is hoped this greater awareness will attract, retain and develop members.

An annual review will measure the success of the activities including previous activities and those introduced as part of this strategy. Recommendations will be made on whether any changes should be considered with regard to the outputs covered by this strategy, or the proportion of resources allocated to each of them.

Key success measures of electronic publications include:

- open rates greater than 24%
- click through rates greater than 3%
- new subscriptions (5 % per annum)

Facebook and Twitter will be measured using reach and engagement figures, as well as the growth in followers. Targeted advertising will increase followers on Facebook; therefore, the proportional increase is higher than for Twitter. In the 12 months from February 2018:

- the APEN Facebook page had 254 followers with the target to increase this to 400 over a 12-month period
- the APEN Twitter account had 494 followers with the target to increase this to 600 over a 12-month period
- the APEN LinkedIn account had 522 members with the target to increase this to 650 over a 12-month period

Other publications will be assessed, in part, by the survey of members as determined by the Board. The number of people accessing website will also be measured through Google analytics.

Features, media releases and case studies will be assessed on their take-up – including the use of features in magazines where direct liaison has been carried out.

All new members will be requested to indicate how they heard about APEN to verify reach.

APPENDIX 1 – TERMS OF REFERENCE APEN COMMUNICATION SUB-COMMITTEE

1.0 Introduction

This Terms of Reference (ToR) describes the purpose of the APEN Communication Sub-committee (Committee).

2.0 Membership

The Committee will comprise of a minimum of one (1) APEN Board Member and a minimum of three (3) external persons with appropriate expertise. Members will be appointed by the APEN Board.

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

The Committee is responsible for the following:

- Providing direction on the communications strategic planning process;
- Developing and periodically updating an APEN communications strategic plan for APEN Board approval;
- Identifying APEN's communications needs and priorities through appropriate consultation;
- Assessing and evaluating the delivery of communications periodically against the needs and/or expectations of the APEN membership;
- Recommending communications initiatives to the APEN Board for approval, as appropriate;
- Supporting the efforts of the APEN Board and other APEN committees or working groups by such actions as:
    - Developing and implementing an effective protocol for dealing with media enquiries;
    - Developing and implementing an effective protocol relating to the approval of website content and messages to the membership, media and public generally;
    - Developing and implementing an effective protocol for tracking media worthy content;
    - Developing and implementing an effective protocol for dissemination of membership worthy correspondence;
- Providing oversight on the implementation of the internal and external communications programs of APEN, which may include but not be limited to the development and maintenance of the APEN website;

- Promoting recognition and awareness of APEN as an organisation promoting the interests of its members;
- Providing advice to the APEN Board, as appropriate, on communications matters as they arise;
- Identifying the annual budgetary requirements related to the delivery of communications;
- Developing and proposing policies and changes thereto in relation to communications for APEN Board approval;
- Providing periodic reports and updates to the APEN Board on communications;
- Approving expenditures relating to the delivery of communications, as appropriate.

4.0 Chair

The Committee shall be chaired by an appointed APEN Board Member and shall be responsible for chairing the meetings, reporting activities of the Committee to the APEN Board, ensuring that the meetings move forward in an efficient manner and that updates on communication-related matters are provided to the APEN Board as appropriate.

If the Chair is not available, then the Vice Chair will run the Committee proceedings.

Chair responsibilities:

- provide direction to the committee regarding communication activities
- provide advice on meeting agendas
- inform the committee on key progress and other related issues
- ensure that meetings run to time and allow each member to participate
- nominate an acting Chair in her/his absence.

5.0 Meetings

The APEN Executive Officer is responsible for organising the Committee meetings and will provide secretariat services for the meetings as required. The secretariat is responsible for ensuring that the operational, administrative and decision-making arrangements for the Committee are effective and followed. This includes but is not limited to ensuring that the level of operation, administration and decision-making of the Committee is in line with the objectives and scope of the project.

6.0 Agenda Items

All Committee meeting agenda items must be prepared by the APEN Executive Officer and distributed at least five working days prior to the next scheduled meeting.

7.0 Minutes & Meeting Papers

The Executive Officer will provide a record of all Committee meetings as Minutes.

Full copies of the Minutes, including attachments, shall be provided to all Committee members no later than 15 working days following each meeting.

By agreement of the Committee, out-of-session decisions will be deemed acceptable. Where agreed, all out-of-session decisions shall be recorded in the Minutes of the next scheduled Committee meeting.

The Minutes of each Committee meeting will be maintained by the Executive Officer.

8.0 Frequency of Meetings

Committee meetings shall be convened on an as-needed basis but no less than quarterly. Meetings may be held in person, by telephone or on-line forum.

9.0 Proxies to Meetings

No proxies are permitted.

10.0 Quorum Requirements

Quorum shall be a majority of the membership of the Committee. The quorum must contain at least one APEN Board Member.

11.0 Term

The Committee will operate for a 12-month duration. This Terms of Reference will be ongoing until changed or terminated by the APEN Board.

12.0 Committee Arrangements

12.1 Decision making

Recommendations and decisions of the Communications Committee, to the extent decisions may be rendered, shall be made by consensus. Where there is no consensus in the case of an issue considered out-of-session, it will be referred for discussion at the next in-session meeting.

12.2 Conflict of interest

Where a Committee member identifies a potential conflict of interest (whether material, personal or financial) with respect to discussion or activity, that individual must immediately contact the Chair for decision. If required, that individual should arrange for an alternative person with appropriate expertise to act in their role while that issue is being addressed.

A Committee member also cannot provide information obtained from the Committee papers, discussions or activities to other parties if it would benefit either themselves or another party.

13.0 Confidentiality

Committee members will not use the Confidential Information disclosed to it by the other party for its own use or for any purpose except to carry out discussions concerning the completion of any technical or business relationships between themselves. Committee members will disclose the Confidential Information to any third party or to its employees or associates except employees or associates who are required to have the information to carry out the contemplated technical relationship or business.

Committee members will protect and safeguard the Confidential Information received from the other party against unauthorised publication or disclosure, such protection to be by procedures no less stringent than those utilised by each party in protecting its own Confidential Information from disclosure to third parties.

Committee members will take all steps necessary to protect the secrecy of and avoid disclosure or use of Confidential Information of each of the other parties to prevent it from falling into the public domain or the possession of unauthorised persons. Committee members will notify the other party in writing of any misuse or misappropriation of such Confidential Information which may come to its attention.

14.0 Privacy

The Executive Officer will provide secretariat services to the Committee and will collect, use, store and disclose personal information of the Committee members in accordance with Schedule 1- Australian Privacy Principles of the Privacy Act 1988. "Personal information" means any information or opinion about an identified, or reasonably identifiable, individual.

15.0 Financial arrangements

There are no financial delegations associated with the Committee. The Committee will seek agreement from the APEN Board for any expenditure required to attend the obligations.

16.0 Return of Materials

Any materials or documents which have been furnished by any party to any other party will be promptly returned, accompanied by all copies of the documentation, after the business possibility has been rejected or concluded, or upon written request by the party providing the materials or documents.

17.0 Amendment, Modification or Variation

This Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation and agreement by the APEN Board.

APPENDIX 2 – KEY CONTACTS AND RESPONSIBLITIES

Who – primary/ secondary contacts	Communication Role
Graham Harris	
Anthony Kachenko	
Roe Currie	
Donna Lucas	
Pat Hamilton	
Chrissy Stokes	
John James	
Austin McLennan	
Jacob Betros	
Adrian Englefield	
Jodie Ward	
Greg Mills	